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The Professional Organization Of Sociology: A View From Below

BY MARTIN NICOLAUS

The trunk of political power has many branches. One of these is the professional organization of sociology, the American Sociological Association. The upper, fatter portion of this branch is grafted seamlessly, with contractual cement, to the civil, economic and military sovereignty which constitutes the trunk. From that source, the organization spreads outward and downward along the institutional scaffolding, carrying the authoritative views on matters of social reality into the universities, junior colleges, and high schools. In addition to the general dissemination of propaganda, professional sociology has the major specific functions of aiding industrial, civil, and military authorities in the solution of manpower control problems of a limited order, and of preparing university candidates for careers in the official bureaucracies. As a source of legitimation for the existing sovereignty, and as a laboratory of refinements in the processes by which a tribute of blood, labor, and taxation is extracted from the subject population, the professional organization of sociology today represents the concrete fulfillment of the charter vision of its founding fathers.

375
The
Antioch
Review

Sociology is not alone among the professions which are an extension of sovereignty by other means. That it shares this constituent function with the organizations of other disciplines is affirmed in the authoritative *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968), by a sociologist of world repute, who has long played the role of advocate general for all the post-war professions. Under the rubric "Professions," Talcott Parsons moves the relationship between the professions and the power structure into extraordinarily sharp focus with the use of a homely metaphor; he writes:

The fundamental origin of the modern professional system, then, has lain in the marriage between the academic professional and certain categories of practical men.

The professions, in other words, play a female role. In the form of marriage which typically obtains within the professional stratum, and to a great extent elsewhere as well, the female partner is in an economically dependent status, and hence routinely subordinate to the male partner's will. This relationship may be described as an institutionalized appropriation by the superior of the subordinate's services, in return for money or commodities. Accurate also, though circumspectly phrased is sociologist Parsons' view of the prevailing *quid pro quo*. The author, most recently, of a work, *American Sociology*, which was commissioned by the Voice of America, Parsons writes that these "practical men"

... have taken responsibility, on a basis more of specialized competence than of a diffuse religious or ideological legitimation, for a variety of operative functions in the society.

This testifies to the author's continuing sensitivity to the prevailing drift. In this year of war, inflation and recession, the men who "have taken responsibility" for "operative functions" such as expanding the empire, driving the labor force and collecting taxes, do indeed suffer from a lack of any intrinsic source of "diffuse religious or ideological legitimation." In thus describing what it is that the professions in general supply to their unofficial conjugal master, sociologist Parsons has also described his own profession, in particular, with pinpoint accuracy. The analogy which is thus established between the modern professional body on the one hand, and the enterprise commonly known as the oldest profession, on the other, can stand as crowning evidence of the synthetic powers on which Parsons' eminence as spokesman for sociology justly rests, and as proof of his unerring grasp of essentials.

FROM COMTE TO CONGRESS

The formal political organization of the contemporary academic professional bodies is the product of a long historical development. A brief examination of the pivotal figures and events in the growth of sociology will show that the current posture of this profession, in method, theory and practice, is fully congruent with its charter vision, and proceeds in an orthodox line from the contributions of its pioneers.

While social thought in general is as old as civilization, sociology as a special field is comparatively recent in origin, arising long after the medieval university's division of labor had become consolidated in early industrial society. It was perhaps in part this lack of a feudal patent which accounts for Auguste Comte's enthusiasm for things medieval. Among the conservatives of his day, this father of sociology (or, some hold, godfather) was counted a distinct reactionary. Unlike the majority of his contemporaries, who rejected the rational, humanist spirit of the French Enlightenment, Comte (1798-1857) rejected also the achievements of the seventeenth century, of the Renaissance, and of the Reformation. The only circle of his own time with which he felt a close affinity was a group known as the "retrograde school." "Long live the retrograde school, the immortal group under the leadership of Maistre," he wrote, referring to a gathering of papists, gothics, race-mystics, ultra-monarchists, and theocrats who are the intellectual ancestors of twentieth-century monarchism, anti-Semitism and fascism.* The core of the Comtean vision of society, which it was the mission of sociology, using the "positive" method, to realize, lies in the marriage of modern capitalist-industrial productive forces with the kind of social and political relationships which obtained at the peak of theocratic feudalism. To achieve this end, he proposed the establishment, at public expense, of a caste of scientist-priests (*les sociologues*), whose function it would be to endow the industrial and other secular authorities with the unquestionable, transcendental sanction they intrinsically lacked. The Parsonian perspective cited above expresses the Comtean idea precisely.

But sociology remained a vague current within philosophy until, near the turn of the century, Comte's compatriot Emile Durkheim succeeded in having the first university chair created specifically in sociology. Abandoning the broadly deductive, philosophical vein, Durkheim wrote in his path-finding work, *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, that sociologists study "facts," specifically, "social facts." These were to be recognized and distinguished from, for example, "psychological facts," by the sign of the "constraint" which they exercised. That is, a phenomenon is "social" when its operation is beyond the control not only of any individual but also of the population as a whole; when it imposes itself on the inhabitants of a country with compelling force. Toward these basic data, sociologists are to adopt, following Comte, a "positive" stance. Since Comte took great pains to have his methodology match his political ideology, the precipitate of the Durkheimian formulas is a reverent empiricism, which supplies scientific sanction for a patriotic posture toward the facts of social compulsion. Or, to paraphrase a passage by Karl Marx on academic political economy, sociology merely formulates the laws of oppressed social life. To this basis, Durkheim later added an additional dimension by postulating that the structure of

* Quoted by Robert A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (New York, 1966), p. 13.

oppression in any given society originates in, and expresses, the collective unconscious will of the population. With these certificates, sociology was admitted into the French universities.

In Germany, sociology achieved academic acceptance with a similar strategy, albeit couched in a different vocabulary. Apart from the thinly-veiled medievalism of Toennies and the lacy intuitions of Simmel, the arena was dominated by the great Max Weber's epic campaign against the influence of Marx. This battle culminated in the sociologist's ultimate identification of the Prussian military bureaucracy, in its ideal-typical form, as the highest social embodiment of rationality. Weber also introduced into sociology the comparative method, which compares the laws of two or more oppressed societies in order to deduce the laws of oppressed societies in general. Weber summarized the method, theory and practice of the modern social sciences in two speeches to Munich university audiences during a period of student unrest a few years prior to the beer-hall putsch. In these addresses, the doctrine of "value-free social science," under which banner the German universities were integrated into the Prussian bureaucracy during the Nazi period, received its seminal and constituent expression.

In the United States, sociology originally served primarily as a conduit through which European conservative social thought was introduced into the American academic milieu. To these currents, of which the later work of the "functionalists" Parsons, Merton, Coser, and others is the naturalization and the creative synthesis, the early American practitioners added a Protestant social-meliorist bent (which proved of short duration) and the "participant-observation" method. The latter originally meant taking conscience and notebook in hand while going slumming; today it finds application as a form of social espionage.* For two decades after its organizational incorporation as the American Sociological Society in 1905, sociology prospered, at least numerically, as the wholesome attitudes which it dispensed found increasing favor with college authorities. However, compared to its booming rival, psychology, sociology barely vegetated internally, remaining primarily a lecturing occupation, until an experiment in industrial management aroused widespread business interest in its practical applications.

Dissatisfied with the slow pace of output at its Hawthorne plant in Chicago, the Western Electric Company in 1927 hired a team of Harvard psychologists and cultural anthropologists to explore the problem. After selecting several small groups of workers for special attentions, and spying on and cross-examining the remainder, the researchers came to the conclusion that neither individual nor cultural factors could adequately account for the collective slow-down in production. Harvard business specialist

* See Alan P. Bates, *The Sociological Enterprise* (Boston, 1967), p. 147: "On other occasions, the sociologist may simply arrange to be present at a social event (perhaps a riot, crowd or audience) in which he is professionally interested. He remains outside the situation, so to speak, but closely observes what goes on." —And reports to his patrons.

Elton Mayo, in his widely-distributed assessment of the experiments, concluded that the explanation must be sought in the realm of sociology, and advanced tentative hypotheses which drew on Durkheim and the Comtean synthesis.

As the depression intervened, however, and the rise of unionism at the Hawthorne plant called for more direct forms of labor force control, sociology was not able immediately to capitalize on the reputation which the prominence of Mayo's conversion had gained for it. Throughout the depression, the profession's ranks thinned and its influence waned. Not until World War II did the opportunity for a breakthrough again present itself. Faced with unprecedented demands on its officer corps' ability to manage and control millions of fresh recruits, the Pentagon contracted with a team of sociologists headed by Samuel Stouffer for the development of a set of questionnaires, tests, indices, and measurements. Published in four volumes after the war as *The American Soldier*, and containing no analysis of the demobilization riots which occurred in the Pacific toward war's end, this military project was the cornerstone of a sociological research enterprise whose growth has continued without significant interruption since that time.

In 1958, the name of the scholarly organization was changed from American Sociological Society to Association (ASS to ASA), symbolizing the submergence of the traditional WASP lecturing-sermonizing occupation under the new order of professionalism, which elaborates the theoretical principles of the older tradition via a sophisticated research technology so as to produce results with immediate commercial value to corporate and governmental purchasers. In 1960, the ASA moved its headquarters to Washington, D.C., and engaged a full-time lobbyist at a salary reputed to be \$20,000 annually. As the frictionless control of the subject population has continued to be problematic for the civil, military, and economic authorities, so the sociological profession has prospered. Amounting to 1600 persons in 1946, membership in the ASA today stands at more than 12,000.

THEY ALSO SERVE

In his aptly-titled book, *The Sociological Enterprise* (1967), sociologist Alan P. Bates, an influential ASA functionary, draws attention to

. . . a point that is obvious enough but nevertheless significant: like any other discipline, sociology is supported by society, which pays the salaries of people called 'sociologists' and the expenses of their research.
[Bates, p. 71.]

A less official sociologist, Irving L. Horowitz, provides a more detailed breakdown of this "society" which pays these "people called sociologists":

Given the complex nature of social science activities and their increasing costs—both for human and for machine labor—the government

becomes the most widespread buyer. Government policy-makers get the first yield also because they claim a maximum need. Private pressure groups representing corporate interests are the next highest buyer of social science services. . . . The sources of funds for research tend to be exclusively concentrated in the upper class. [Horowitz, Professing Sociology (Chicago, 1968), pp. 270-271.]

Or: given the increasingly expensive nature of social research, those who engage in it, who make their living from it, are compelled to turn with outstretched hand toward the civil, military, and economic sovereignty, and prove themselves "useful." This social fact is basic to any understanding of the politics of the organized sociological profession.

In the postwar era the road to prominence, hence office, within the profession has been paved with research publication. Once he obtains financing for a research venture, the sociologist builds up, through publication, his professional reputation. This form of capital is then convertible into academic promotion, which yields better access to more research funds, permitting further publication, yielding further promotion, even closer proximity to the big money, and so on up, until, as supervisor of graduate students, the successful sociological entrepreneur is in a position to start and manage younger persons on the same spiral. The inevitable consequence of this career-pattern, if ability is held constant, is to reward servility. The structure is such that the achievement of prominence in the profession is a direct function of the decisions of outside financial powers. That the strings are contractual as well as salarial matters little. With a few exceptions, chiefly among the pre-war eminences, today's prominent sociologists are the direct financial creatures, functionally the house-servants, of the civil, military, and economic sovereignty.*

A postwar exception like the late C. Wright Mills only proves the rule. Though the most widely-read sociologist outside the academic world, Mills was barred by his university from training graduate students, for fear that he would raise up others in his image. Given the persistence of the structural constraints inherent in the exercise of the profession, which are partly rooted in the academic structure generally, the chance of another Mills arising in sociology is about equal to the chance of a Fidel Castro emerging in the State Department. Unless this structure changes profoundly, it is safely predictable that the next generation of prominent sociologists will be just as bought as the present one is.

These constraints influence the politics of the profession not only indirectly, by preselecting the group from which the professional notables, officers of the Association, etc., are drawn, but also directly, through the financial structure of the ASA.

* *The financial dependence is already pointed out by Mills in The Sociological Imagination; is common knowledge in the profession; repeated and summarized at length by Horowitz, op. cit., pp. 159-173.*

A motion to compel the Association to issue a complete financial report was defeated at the 1969 convention, so that detailed disclosure of who owns whom will probably have to await liberation of the files *à la* Harvard and Columbia. (1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.) The one and only general sociological law that has ever been discovered, namely that the oppressors research the oppressed, also applies within the ASA. While it encourages its members to engage in the full disclosure of the financial, political, sexual, mental, and other affairs of the subject population, it maintains a tight secrecy around its own affairs. Enough is known, however, to dispel the notion that the ASA is a club or society in the ordinary sense, i.e. that it is financed primarily by membership dues. According to a book entitled *A Sociology of Sociology* (1969), by sociologist Robert W. Friedrichs—a work that is as narcissistic as it sounds—the ASA as early as 1960-61 received 80 per cent of its budget from the government and corporation contracts it “services.” It is unlikely that the proportion has declined since then.

Politically speaking, an organization which receives such a proportion of its resources from above cannot be properly said to “represent” its membership. It succeeds, rather, for the opposite reason, because it “represents” the imperial treasury to its membership; or, better, that it represents its members’ desire to be connected to that source. The political model after which the ASA is fashioned does not, therefore, resemble the standard pyramid, in which power originates in the base and rises toward the apex. The opposite is the case; to understand this power structure, one has to visualize a cluster of grapes on a vine, or barnacles on a ship.

The matter of direct-imperialist research provides an ample illustration of this truth. The scandals of the Michigan State-sponsored Vietnam Project, of Project Camelot, Pax Americana, and others, have taught discretion but not abstinence. For example, while the panel on “military sociology” was omitted from the 1969 convention of the ASA, perhaps as a result of Sociology Liberation Movement opposition in ’68, the ends for which the military is the means continue to be promoted, if anything, with greater pomp. At a 1969 convention panel entitled “New Social Networks Among Interdependent Societies,” the main attraction was “Discussion and Remarks by the Guest of Honor, His Excellency Saedjatmoko, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia.” The panel should have been titled “Social Change by Mass Murder,” but in that unadorned diction would have been offensive to the sight, and would have failed its purpose of socializing sociologists in socio-cide.

It would be an error to believe that direct military and imperialist penetration into the sociological profession encounters general resistance from within. The whole postwar research boom was begun with Pentagon research, it should be remembered; and, as sociologist Irving L. Horowitz reports, the leading sociologists have long been lobbying and pressuring for more. The case of Horowitz himself provides an enlighten-

ing perspective. Among the liberals in the profession, the editor of *Trans-Action* magazine (nicknamed *Deal*) was instrumental, in 1965, in exposing Project Camelot for the espionage operation that it was. A year later, however, the same Horowitz—as he records in his new volume of collected papers, *Professing Sociology* (1968)—appears on what can only be called his political knees before a congressional subcommittee, pleading for the establishment of an “independent” social science research funding agency. (The Voice of America is also “independent.”) His testimony argues against “secret research” only on grounds of its alleged inefficiency and wastefulness, and contains such pearls as “Congress is uniquely qualified to be the keeper of science.” [*Horowitz*, p. 256.] The occasional verbal hostilities that do occur between government and social science must be understood as analogous to the oaths and nips that pass between master Thornton and his dog Buck in Jack London’s *Call of the Wild*:

Buck had a trick of love expression that was akin to hurt. He would often seize Thornton’s hand in his mouth and close so fiercely that the flesh bore the impress of his teeth for some time afterward. And as Buck understood the oaths to be love words, so the man understood this feigned bite for a caress.

What holds for self-defined marginal figures on the order of Horowitz holds *a fortiori* for the professionally orthodox; the caress from there is with gums alone.

THEY ONLY SERVE

Maintenance and lubrication of this liaison with the economic, military, and civil sovereignty is the main but not the only significant business of the Association. Its array of committees undertakes, among other things, the business of disseminating the results of this connection outward around the world and downward into the colleges and high schools. The committee on publications, for example, besides keeping rein over the ASA’s half-dozen official quarterlies and monthlies, produces a series of monographs and readers in which the official view of the social scene is retailed overseas and at home. The committee on “International Cooperation” maintains liaison with Soviet and East European sociologists, including “rescue” services *à la* Congress for Cultural Freedom; and pursues a program “to encourage the growth of sociology and support the isolated sociologists in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.” (Latin America is apparently considered already in the bag.) A committee on “International Order” dispenses wishful platitudes on the order of “. . . if the conditions may be changed so there will be no more Vietnams.”* The committee on “Social Studies Curriculum in American Secondary Schools” promotes under the social science label variations on the theme of “I Pledge Allegiance” into junior colleges and high schools; a parallel body assists in

* Quotes are from the ASA Convention Program.

the indoctrination of teachers for these courses. Since the great majority of sociology BA's are hired by the official bureaucracies, the cycle of sovereignty-sociology-sovereignty is neatly closed at both ends.

Given these underlying structural realities, it will come as no surprise to learn that the formal political mechanisms of the ASA resemble those of colonial India, i.e. guided democracy within the upper caste. ASA "members" are divided into four major strata, entitled fellow, active, associate, and student. Only occupants of the first can hold office, and only occupants of the first two, who make up about forty per cent of the total, are eligible to vote in such Association affairs as the executive committee chooses to permit them to decide. The upper caste, which elects the president, vice-president, and a twelve-member Council, is composed of full-time responsible Ph.D.'d professional sociologists employed by universities, business, or government. The Council is—apart from such power as the permanent executive staff may retain to itself—the supreme governing body within the Association. It appoints all committees, including the nominating committee for next year's elections, and can accept or reject committee recommendations as it sees fit. Nor is it bound by resolutions passed or decisions made by the voting membership at "business" meetings; once elected, its power is beyond appeal.*

POLIS AND POLICE

Quite apart from any effect the activities of the recently organized insurgent caucuses may have had, all has not been well within the organized sociological profession, even on its own terms. The glimpses into the inner core which the official record affords give a picture of spreading unrest within the upper ranks themselves. [See "*Official Reports and Proceedings*," *passim*.] The journals, for example, are plagued by editorial troubles. There is a repeated complaint about the lack of "creative theoretical articles." A new standing committee on "professional ethics" has had to be minted; the Association, for the first time in its history, finds it necessary to take out libel insurance; and, worst of all, the influx of new members between 1968 and 1969 was the lowest in four years or more. What accounts for these phenomena of disquiet, and what is their significance?

Charles P. Loomis, who chairs an ASA committee, allowed himself, in the official record, to compare the flock of overfed, business-suited Rotarians who make up the ASA core to what he calls "various minority groups," because of the fact that both "are the first to suffer from depression or cutbacks and the last to gain from increases." While the comparison is "professional" at its worst, i.e. by implication racist—it does contain an interesting and significant grain of truth. Any body which is as parasitic upon the economic structure as is the ASA is necessarily highly sensitive to economic fluctuations. And it is a fact that when the economy is on the

upswing, both sociology and the subject population, each in its sphere, prospers relatively, while when a recession hits, both suffer absolutely, each in its sphere. What accounts for this correlation?

At the turn of the century, a leader of the Social Democratic Party in Germany, who understood the society of her day so well that its authorities ordered her assassination, provided the key to an understanding of this question when she wrote:

*The German social scientists have always functioned as an extension of the police. While the latter act against Social Democracy with rubber truncheons, the former work with the weapons of the intellect.**

Had she been a sociologist, perhaps a Mertonian, Rosa Luxemburg would have expressed herself in slightly different words; she might have said: police and sociology are functional alternatives. Sociological research thrives on a low level of social unrest, widely diffused; but when, as in recessions and depressions, unrest changes from passive to active, when resistance breaks out in overt acts, in strikes, revolts, riots, and revolutions, then the “weapons of the intellect” which sociological research supplies to the authorities become increasingly functionless. What counts as “hardware” within sociology counts as “software” for sovereignty. When the subject population has had enough of being studied, researched, analyzed, and tabulated, and actively demands instead to be fed, housed, clothed, schooled, served, alive, and sovereign, then the sponsors of research shift their assets toward the sponsorship of a different science, an alternate profession. As the evidence of the United States over the last four or five years shows, the positive correlation between the functionally contradictory prosperities of sociology and the subject population is explicable by reference to the inverse correlation between the functionally alternate prosperities of the sociological and the police professions.

When the ruling class switches its funds from sociological hardware to the hardware of sovereignty, the sociological profession has little alternative but to retreat behind the line of truncheons, hoping that the social organization of repression will be inefficient enough in the eyes of its masters to warrant sociological research, so that something, at least, can be salvaged. The appearance of articles and books on the sociology of the police, and the presentation of a paper on “The Professional Cop” in a panel on “Sociology of the Professions” at the 1969 ASA convention are signs that this opportunity, however small, is not being wasted.

The changeover from one function to another can catch many a man of conscience in its gears, producing anguish. Sociologist Richard Flacks, a former officer of SDS, told a Sociology Liberation Movement panel audience in the San Francisco Hilton this past September that his questionnaire-and-interview studies of students who participated in campus insurrections prior to Chicago, August 1968—the crest of the changeover—had strictly

* Quoted in *Peter Nettl*, Rosa Luxemburg (*abr.*; Oxford, 1969), p. 141.

preserved the anonymity of his respondents from official eyes. Nevertheless, he confessed, contrary to every intention, the published findings of his studies fed ammunition to the kind of politics that sees the root of the student movement in overly-permissive parents. It was with this notion of the students as spoiled children, it will be remembered, that Chicago's Mayor Daley urged his troopers not to spare the rod: the rising function appropriates the products of the waning function. Delivered of this *mea culpa*, this individual confession of a collective burden, Flacks proceeded to a meeting of the new professional ethics committee, there perhaps to argue with chairman Lewis Coser [who was one of the initial sponsors of Camelot] whether or not where the rockets come down is any business of Werner Von Braun.

As the functional changeover takes place from the sociological to the police professions, the level of anxiety in the councils of the former takes a perceptible upward turn. When the pool of funds shrinks, the frogs within it start hopping; none wants to be at the edges, and the premium on lily-pads near the center is terrific. As the sciences operate with a system of individual payment for socially-produced work, a noticeable contraction in the aggregate of research funds produces a marked change in the tenor of scholarly discourse. "Creative theoretical articles"—the kind that pay nothing and take much time—cease to appear; if a man has ideas that might make for interesting research, he is best advised, if he regards his career, to keep them to himself. The boundaries between what is my idea and what is your idea acquire an increasing commercial importance, with the result that the incidence of "plagiarism" and "unethicity" rises, scholarly disputes take on an increasingly economic, hence "personal" and "libelous" character, and the aggregate output of any ideas at all declines.

Given its dependence on the treasury just described, in times of tight money the professional organization of sociology follows its patron to the political right, along with the rest of the academic world. Radical and liberal sociologists have been or are being fired at the University of Chicago, Connecticut, Chico State (California), Mills College, George Williams, and Simon Fraser, without any spontaneous sign of interest or concern from the ASA. On the scholarly level, the drift to the right is observable in the pages of the ASA's official *American Sociological Review*, where the totalitarian implications of the functionalist method when coupled to technological means and modes of research can be studied in full theoretical bloom. Those familiar with both sociology and politics will recognize where the ASA stands from the official Theme of the 1969 convention: "Group Conflict and Mutual Acceptance"—Simmel/Coser and Billy Graham, the left wing of functionalism and the right wing of Richard Nixon, the ancient bedmates brought to the altar.

A CAUCUS WITH LOVE AND DEATH

By September of 1969 the rightward shift of the professional framework had produced a response in the opening tactic of the Sociology Liberation

Movement's "counter-convention," which convened irregularly in a church a block from the Hilton. The organizers chose to commemorate, in a lengthy panel discussion, the spirit of Pitirim Sorokin, the late refugee from the 1917 revolution, whom already Lenin had pegged as a weather-vane. After achieving the ASA presidency, sixteen years behind his Harvard colleague and arch-rival Parsons, Sorokin came to see fault with the Vietnam war, as being immoral, expensive and probably unconstitutional. This deathbed gesture toward radicalism, the first of his American career, sufficiently established him in the view of his SLM sponsors to justify minting a box of "Sorokin Lives" buttons, a tactic which the ASA neatly topped by announcing the establishment of a Sorokin Award, thus winning the first round.

The drift of the younger people, however, was in the opposite direction. A few years ago, one of the Supreme Sociologists, I believe it was Lipset, was reported to have made his exit from the convention hotel by unhooking his name badge and tossing it bridally toward a group of graduate students, who (reportedly) scrambled to pick it off the floor. This year there was none of that; the charisma was in the negative. Lipset was denounced in absentia on "his" panel as an Air Force intellectual; the SLM truth squads, not the panelists, won the applause; and one young man said it all with an oversized name tag bearing the legend, "Professor Bullshit, Honky U." The SLM was a soporific in its isolated sanctuary, but inside the Hilton it crackled.

Theodor Adorno, the eminent Frankfurt philosopher of praxis, had died during the week preceding the convention. But, as his era had passed over a year ago, when he used police against an in-house application of his theory by his students, he went unmourned in San Francisco. As the panels droned and grated on, the news filtered in of the death of Ho Chi Minh and galvanized the SLM forces into action. The next evening at the plenary session, as ASA president Turner stood with his manuscript of "The Public Perception of Protest" in hand, the words of his address leaped off the page and became flesh: members of the SLM seized the microphones and spoke movingly for twenty minutes in memory of Ho Chi Minh.

The SLM caucus, the Women's Caucus, and the Black Caucus, separately and together, beleaguered and attacked the upper caste from every angle, without quarter. Although their votes counted for nothing, the insurgent forces had the majority on nearly every resolution submitted to the business meeting. Whether the elders liked it or not, the movements of blacks, students, and women were no longer the subjects of research monographs, but forces to be dealt with in the immediate present.

The professional organization of sociology appears to be caught in the pincers of history. The market tides are turning against the product on which its prosperity chiefly depends. It has barely recruits and hardly legitimacy enough for its own consumption. As the uprisings of the subject population diminish its credit in the budgets of its patrons, so they

demystify it in the eyes of its followers. What "science" is this, that only holds true when its subjects hold still? Strange "laws," that presuppose humanity in formaldehyde! What scientists are these, who peer into everything below, yet see nothing ahead? Now finally it dawns on these minipopes, Rotarians, dreamers and technocrats that they are trapped between the descending sky and the rising of the earth, abandoned by angels and disciples at once.

Yet the devil is old, as Weber warned. The "liberation of sociology," which the most militant caucus in the social sciences inscribed on its banner, is a noble cause; but even the devil knows it is a contradiction in terms. Sociology is not an oppressed people or a subjugated class. It is a branch of the tree of political power, an extension of sovereignty by other means. It has survived many a borer-from-within, a pecker-from-without, and carver-of-initials-in-the-bark. To "liberate" the branch means not to sit on it whistling the "Marseillaise" or the "Internationale," but to saw it off. If that is forgotten, this movement will lead not so much to the liberation of sociology as to the proliferation of ASA panels, sections, and committees on the "sociology of liberation." In the last analysis, the only moves toward liberation within sociology are those which contribute to the process of liberation *from* sociology. The point is not to reinterpret oppression but to end it.

ADDENDUM:

Here is a practical way to begin sawing. Instead of carrying knowledge from the people to the rulers, try reversing the machinery.

Here is an example of how it is being tried at Simon Fraser. You could put such a notice in the local press or on the next leaflet. Person-to-person

contact is even better. Try going to community meetings and offering to help.—M.N.

Can we do research
for you? Conduct
educational? Give
talks? Discuss how
you think we might
be of help? Our
services are free.
Write:

Professor M. Briemberg
c/o PSA Dept.
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby 2, B.C.
Phone: 291-3777